



Doncaster  
Council

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APPENDIX 1

Councillor Andrea Robinson  
Edenthorpe and Kirk Sandall Ward

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019  
Call: 01302 882625  
Email: [andrea.robinson@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.robinson@doncaster.gov.uk)

Mayor Ros Jones  
Doncaster Council  
Civic Office  
Waterdale  
Doncaster  
DN1 3BU

Dear Ros,

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – All Age Learning Disability and Autism Strategy

Members from the Health and Adult Social Care and Children and Young People Scrutiny Panels have undertaken three fact-finding meetings to contribute to the work being undertaken on the All Age Learning Disability and Autism Strategy.

To achieve this Members gave consideration to current statistical information and work undertaken to date, attended the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board and met with carers of and people with learning disabilities and autism.

There were a number of challenges and experiences shared with Members during discussions. The people they met stressed one of their major concerns, when applying for assistance from a number of services, was how difficult it was to regularly have to complete forms and finding someone to help them do this, was becoming increasingly difficult.

A further area that was close to people's hearts was having somewhere to meet and make friends, particularly when some live in more rural and outlying areas. Such places are available in other towns in South Yorkshire and it is hoped that a venue can be developed in Doncaster. It was noted that at the "Big Health Days" workshop at the Doncaster Deaf Trust, information would be provided in terms of adult relationships.

With regard to the importance of registering to vote in an election, Members recognised that many support mechanisms are already in place making the process as accessible as possible. The Panel wished to highlight that any additional

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mechanisms in place, over and above that already undertaken as part of the annual Electoral Register Canvass, be promoted as wide as possible.

Following the above meetings, the Panel made the following recommendations and requests that the Executive:

### Recommendation 1

Investigate whether the Council could provide Supported Internships for people with learning disabilities and autism.

Reason: To support the education and employment section within the Strategy, the Panel questioned whether the provision of Supported Internships within the Council could be provided. It was believed that there were very few initiatives across the Borough and there was a wish to see the Local Authority leading and encouraging all employers across the Doncaster area to offer this provision. This would provide opportunities for young people to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, whilst learning in the work environment.

### Recommendation 2

Review the “Your Life Doncaster” system alongside people with learning disabilities or autism, who do not have a carer or immediate support.

Reason:

To assess how a person with learning disabilities or autism can navigate the “Your Life Doncaster” site. It was highlighted to Councillors during discussions that people with learning disabilities or autism were not always aware of the Your Life Doncaster online system. Concern was expressed, particularly for those people who did not have any immediate support mechanisms, that they may not be aware of the system or not able to navigate it successfully, to find what support is available.

Members learnt that websites were generally not very informative unless users were able to navigate a system thoroughly. Concern was also expressed that not everyone had access to a computer or have the ability or knowledge to access the support systems they require. Therefore, Members wished for sampling to be undertaken to see how many people with Learning Disabilities or Autism were having difficulties using the “Your Life Doncaster” site and to ascertain if and how large the problem was and address issues that were identified.

### Recommendation 3

Ensure that people with learning disabilities and autism have a single pathway of support developed.

Reason: It was a common theme throughout discussion that anyone who has a learning difficulty or autism considered it necessary for their support to be assessed as a whole and not for them to be referred to different services.

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It was stressed that being referred to different services meant that similar forms seeking the same information had to be completed for each service required. It was learnt that people were fearful of having to complete forms and were frustrated by having to repeat answers to the same questions. Concern was expressed that people who did not have any support could struggle with form filling and in turn could create unnecessary stress.

The conversations acknowledged that the engagement sessions and development of a new Strategy was just the start and there was a need to continue listening to people with all needs and abilities. The Strategy would not be a one size fits all but would pick up themes across a number of levels, and would never replace individual care plans.

### Recommendation 4

Highlight within the Strategy the frequency and severity of learning disability amongst people within the prison sector.

Reason: Following consideration of the Youth Justice Plan at Full Council earlier in the year, there was a fear that children and young people that could be criminalised due to their learning disabilities or autism, particularly if it had never been diagnosed with appropriate support put in place.

When seeking employment, Members stressed that it could be daunting for a person of any age to attend the job centre. Bearing this in mind discussions highlighted that a person could be left feeling distressed and in a vulnerable position, therefore concern was expressed that they may be unwillingly drawn into criminal behaviour.

It was highlighted that sometimes the only contact people within this cohort have is with the Department of Work and Pensions and therefore there was a need for the organisation to work closely with Team Doncaster ensuring joined up working and full support for service users.

The current support available in prisons was acknowledged, noting that social workers, worked alongside Prison Officers ensuring appropriate assistance was being provided.

### Recommendation 5

Give consideration to writing to the Department for Work and Pensions asking for the requirement of people with a permanent disability, not to have to be reassessed on an annual basis when claiming PIP (Personal Independent Payment), but to make the award for a longer period.

Reason: Again, Members learnt that assessment forms had to be completed on an annual basis, providing the same information. It was stressed that if a person had been registered with a permanent disability, particularly from childhood, then a longer period of time for assessment should be considered. This may avoid the repetitive processes that are difficult to navigate and in some cases create a huge anxiety.

Recommendation 6

Ask service users what difference the Strategy has made to them specifically when applying for support, benefits, medical assistance and employment, once the Strategy has been agreed and embedded.

Reason:

It was noted that the Strategy engagement sessions had raised many expectations with service users and checks were required to ensure it was meeting its objectives.

To conclude, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the officers copied into this letter for meeting with Members and for the passion they showed towards the work they undertake. I would be grateful if I could receive a response to the recommendations by Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2019.

With kind regards,

Councillor Andrea Robinson  
Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel

cc: Councillor R Blake, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care  
Phil Holmes, Director of Adults Health and Well-being  
Karen Johnson, Assistant Director, Adults Social Care and Safeguarding  
Jayne Gilmour, Project Lead, Adults Health and Wellbeing Transformation  
Gail Fletcher, Team Lead Safeguarding